

EMBASSY OF THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA

PUBLIC AFFAIRS SECTION

TEL: 8802-55662000

FAX: 880-2-9881677, 9885688

E-MAIL: DhakaPA@state.gov

WEBSITE: <http://dhaka.usembassy.gov>



REMARKS BY U.S. AMBASSADOR MARCIA BERNICAT AT DCAB TALK

**October 5, 2015
Press Club Dhaka**

Thank you for joining us here this morning.

I have been looking forward to speaking with the Diplomatic Correspondents because there are so many important stories to share about the U.S. - Bangladesh relationship. Our two countries have a common vision not just for our bilateral relationship, but for the region.

Let me be clear: the U.S. - Bangladesh relationship is stronger than ever and our interests are more closely aligned. Consider the number of interactions we have had this year alone. Not only has Bangladesh been part of President Obama's Countering Violent Extremism initiative since its inception in February, but Foreign Minister Ali and Secretary Kerry had a very productive meeting this year, and we just conducted a successful U.S.-Bangladesh Security Dialogue in Washington. Most recently, the Prime Minister joined President Obama to co-chair the just-completed Peacekeeping Summit at the United Nations General Assembly.

Before taking your questions, I want to highlight a few key areas where our partnership is making a difference in the lives of ordinary Bangladeshis as the country continues its journey to middle income status. We approach Bangladesh as our full-fledged partner, whether we are collaborating on security, development, or economic issues.

For instance, Chevron, which provides 50 percent of Bangladesh's natural gas, has a workforce that is 85 percent Bangladeshi. Equally important, the company promotes and trains from within. And it is not just the energy sector: Coca-Cola has invested US \$75 million in a green-field production facility that will be one of the most advanced bottling plants in the country. Intel is partnering with Grameen to develop software that can advise farmers on the proper amount of fertilizer and pesticides to use. This will be better for the farmers, the environment, and for consumers. And let's not forget that Bangladesh exports to the United States have increased by four percent this fiscal year.

We have been pleased to partner with Bangladesh to attain its very ambitious Millennium Development Goals, efforts that have been enormously successful in areas such as maternal and infant mortality. We will continue to support Bangladesh as it tackles the new Sustainable Development Goals recently adopted at the UN General Assembly Meeting in New York. Our development partnership has been exceptionally fruitful, producing tangible results that both the United States and Bangladesh can point to with pride.

Likewise, throughout our shared history, the United States has partnered with Bangladesh to improve military capabilities and promote stability and peace in South Asia. Last week's CARAT exercises saw our two Navies conduct trainings that counter terrorism and enhance regional maritime security and interoperability.

Let me also underscore the vital importance of our joint efforts to address violent extremism. We have everything we need to fight the emergence of ISIL in Bangladesh. Bangladesh has a Prime Minister who has taken a zero tolerance approach to terrorism. As partners over the years, we have developed the resources, the commitment, and the shared experiences we need to counter terrorism and violent extremism. And we are determined to work together with our shared partners for the safety and security of our countries. This is a global issue that requires a coordinated, global approach.

There are areas of our relationship that require more work, and I can think of no better example than the restoration of GSP. The recent visit of the Assistant United States Trade Representative to assess progress on the Action Plan will help Bangladesh and its partners prepare for the upcoming Sustainability Compact review.

Thank you again for the opportunity to speak with you. I welcome your questions.

=====

**As Prepared for delivery*